

# GV482

## Coursework

Due **Tuesday 2 May 2023 at 17:00**

Submission via Moodle

In the United States of America, states can decide who can vote and who cannot. Individuals who have received a felony conviction (thereafter, felons) often belong to the group of citizens deprived of voting rights. Most states restrict the voting rights of felons in prison, others once they have finished their prison term, but are on parole, others when felons are on probation, and some deprive felons of their voting rights even after they have completed their sentence. Figure 1 shows the different shade of disenfranchisement in the United States as of 2020.

Due to the harshness of law enforcement in the United States, a large number of individuals are affected by these laws. According to [the Sentencing project](#), “[a]n estimated 4.6 million people are disenfranchised due to a felony conviction in 2022.” Further, these voting restrictions disproportionately affect African Americans. This is a direct result of the over-representation of Blacks among felons, a phenomenon which has been associated with the War on Drugs ([Alexander, 2020](#)). As the Sentencing Project notes, “[o]ne in 19 African Americans of voting age is disenfranchised, a rate 3.5 times that of non-African Americans. Among the adult African American population, 5.3 percent is disenfranchised compared to 1.5 percent of the adult non-African American population.” These disparities have led activists to push for change in voting restrictions, especially in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, with the hope that these reforms would benefit African Americans. As the next figure shows, this lobbying has been successful in some states with voting restrictions dropping over time.

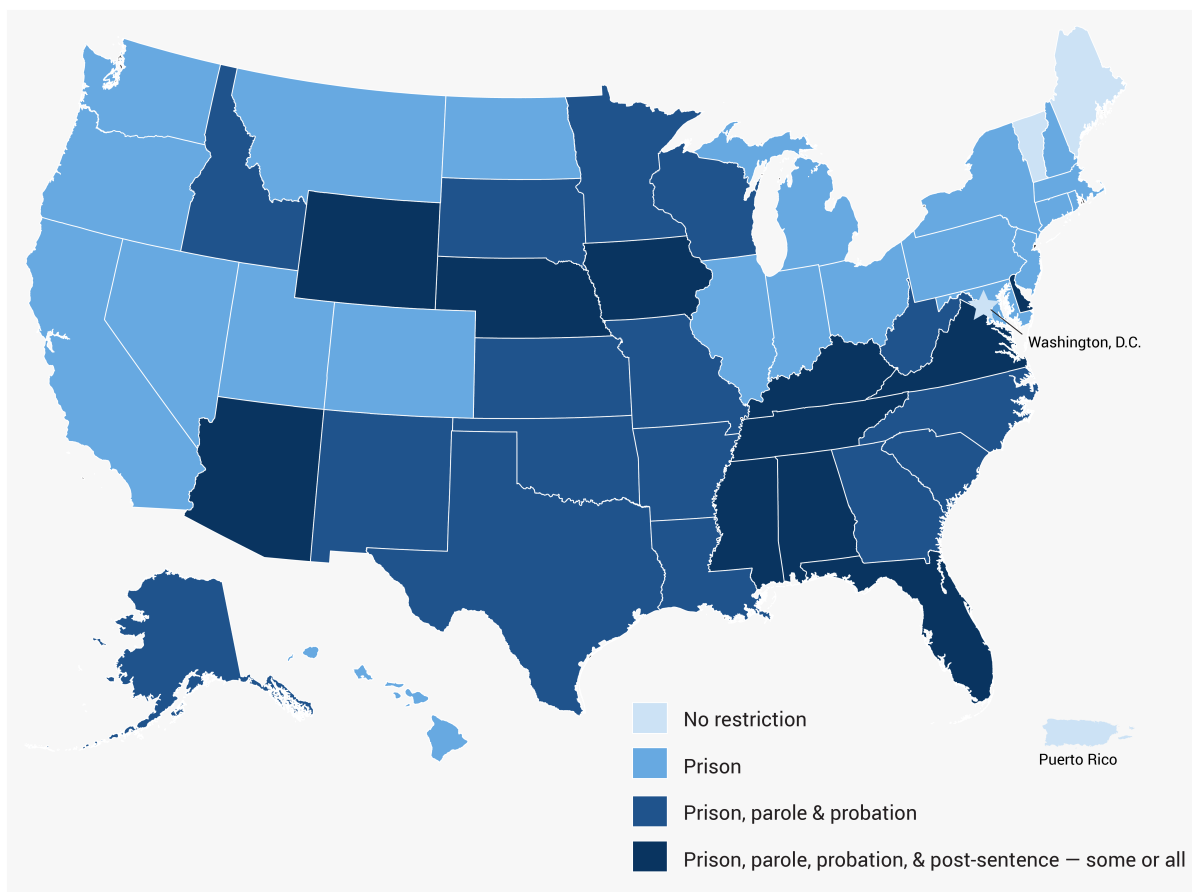


Figure 1: Voting restrictions on felons in US states (Sentencing project)

For example, in the last twenty years, several states restored the voting rights of felons after they exit prison (the blue dashed line): Rhode Island in 2006, Maryland in 2016, New York in 2018, Colorado, Nevada and New Jersey in 2019, California in 2020, and Washington in 2021.

In this coursework, your goal is to study whether felon re-enfranchisement has had the effect on law enforcement hoped by activists who pushed for these voting rights reforms. To do so, you will use the dataset posted on Moodle ([GV482\\_CourseworkData-2022-23.dta](#)), constructed for this coursework. This dataset contains information on arrest per population for the whole population as well as for African Americans, for total arrests and for arrest for drugs (obtained from [FBI Crime Data explorer](#)). It also contains information on voting rights of felons in different states over time (generated from the Locked Out reports from the Sentencing Project). The dataset also contains additional variables (read the `READ ME.txt` file for more information).

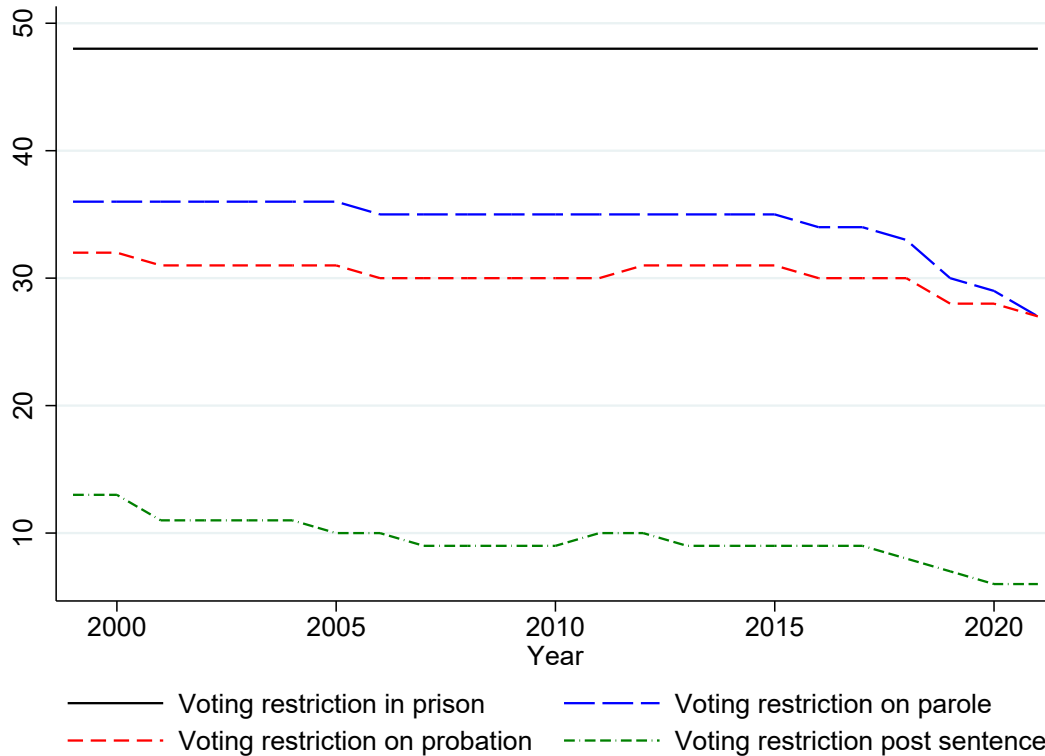


Figure 2: Number of states with various voting restrictions

Your tasks are the following:

1. Provide a descriptive statistics of the relevant variables.
2. Conduct an OLS analysis of the relationship between the relevant arrest data and felons' voting rights.  
*(Note: Your OLS analysis should not include any fixed effect. It would be a simple correlation (with possibly some controls) between the independent variable and the dependent variable (or variables) of interest.*
3. Discuss the issues associated with OLS and propose a more robust research design.
4. Discuss the limitations of the empirical approach you proposed and employed in Task 3.
5. Run possible additional tests
6. Write up your analysis discussing whether the hopes of activists regarding the impact of felons' re-enfranchisement on law enforcement have been met.

You are expected to submit the following:

- A write-up (essay) of a maximum of 3,000 words (**mandatory**);
- A do file in Stata (**mandatory**);
- Additional data if you have used some (**optional**).

Your essay can be organized along the tasks described above (each task being a section) with the addition of a short introduction and conclusion. Alternatively, you can structure your essay as a paper with the tasks above serving as a check list.

Your do file should contain on the first line as a comment your student exam number. Your do file should not contain any identifiable information. Your do file should be submitted as `.do`. Your do file should comment out any command exporting tables. Additional databases you use should be named as `YourStudentExamNumber_additionaldatabase1.dta`, `YourStudentExamNumber_additionaldatabase2.dta`, `YourStudentExamNumber_additionaldatabase3.dta`, etc. Databases should not be in a separate folder on your do file. I must be able to run the do file by just clicking run.

### Marking criteria:

- (a) Expectations for a grade of **50**: provide descriptive statistics *in an appropriate and informative format* and the results of your OLS analysis.
- (b) Expectations for a grade of **60**: on top of (a), discuss the limitations of the OLS analysis and propose as well as run an alternative research design.
- (c) Expectations for a grade of **70**: on top of (b), discuss the limitations of the research design you used in (b).
- (d) Expectations for a grade of **80**: on top of (c), run additional tests with the data provided or adding additional data.

Please note that the marking criteria above are *indicative*. Your grade will be a function of the quality of your writing (clarity, how well you justify your empirical choices, and the logical consistency of your conclusion based on the evidence you gathered). You will be penalised for poorly

formatted written submission (in particular, regression tables, I have given you different ways to produce clean tables from Stata so you have no excuse). You will also be penalised if your do file does not run properly (i.e., if Stata stops unexpectedly when I run it).

For example, a nicely written piece with the appropriate descriptive statistics, a well-formatted OLS table (think about the way we did the tables in the problem sets), a functioning do file, and clear conclusions could get a grade of 58. In turn, a submission with poorly written and formatted tables, a do file that does not run properly, and no logically consistent conclusion emerging from the analysis could get a grade of 50 or less even if the student has run other and better analyses than OLS.

**Good luck!**